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Newport board OKs pesticide container plan

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NEWPORT -- Selectmen agreed during Wednesday's meeting to make this town's transfer station just the second in the state to accept used agricultural pesticide containers.

The only other facility that accepts the non-refillable, high density polyethylene containers is in Frenchville. Newport's central location will mean the transfer station could have jugs delivered from as far south as Augusta and as far north as Millinocket, said Jim Ricker, town manger.

But the plastic containers, which range in size from one-gallon jugs to 55-gallon drums, are already being delivered to the town's transfer station, Ricker said. Agreeing to accept the containers from outside communities will not only benefit the town financially -- the containers are guaranteed to generate at least 20 cents per pound -- but would offer the town more control.

The pesticide containers are currently dropped off with little oversight, but under terms of the contract with the Ag Container Recycling Council, the containers would be shipped to the facility only after being inspected to ensure each has been sufficiently rinsed.

Transfer station employees could refuse any containers the employees do not feel have been cleaned sufficiently, Ricker said.

"The farmers are required by law to triple rinse," said Henry Jennings, acting director at the Maine Board of Pesticides Control. "If they come in and your people have reservations, they have the option of rejecting them. You are receiving them. I think your liability is only less if you agree to this." Newport offers a desirable spot not only because of its location, but because it is a relatively new facility with a horizontal baler.

Ricker estimated the town would ship three to four bales per year. The town can cancel the contract at any time, he noted.

"I think it's a good idea," Ricker said.

In other selectmen news:

- Ricker informed the board that the dam gate to Sebasticook Lake is now closed. This fall marked a very successful draw down of the lake, Ricker said.
- Bolster Rubbish Removal has delivered 44 percent less in total tonnage to the transfer station in the two weeks since the company volunteered to discontinue using the facility to unload its large trucks. The decision has forestalled a projected significant shortfall in the solid waste budget.
"It is working," Ricker said. "We are saving money." *Selectmen agreed to institute a pre-employment drug testing policy. All prospective town employee will be subject to the test. There is a \$350 fee to establish the program and \$52 per test thereafter.
- There is a Taxpayer Bill of Rights forum scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Oct. 26 at the Millennium. The forum is being sponsored by state legislature Joshua Tardy and will include both proponents and opponents of the referendum, which will go to the voters in November's state-wide election.